

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA CLASS SPECIFICATION

Class Title: State Trapper

Class Code: 90426

A. Purpose:

State Trappers identify problem wildlife that cause damage to livestock and property or are a threat to human health and safety, and remove the animals by the most efficient and cost-effective means available to provide a reliable and consistent source of animal damage control throughout an assigned geographical area.

B. Distinguishing Feature:

The State Trapper is responsible for animal damage control in an assigned district. The Conservation Officer manages wildlife, fisheries, water, and land resources; enforces wildlife, criminal, and water laws; and implements department programs in an assigned district. The Game, Fish & Parks Program Specialist manages a game, fish, land, or law program in an assigned region.

C. Functions:

(These are examples only; any one position may not include all of the listed examples nor do the listed examples include all functions which may be found in positions of this class.)

1. Responds to wildlife damage complaints from landowners, home owners, and others and develops a schedule of contacts to ensure the most critical situations are addressed immediately and solutions are provided for lesser problems.
 - a. Prioritizes complaints by evaluating the seriousness of the threats to human safety and livestock safety, and the nature and extent of property damage.
 - b. Contacts complainants to perform on-site evaluation of the problems and obtain written permission to work on their property and adjoining property when necessary.
 - c. Provides information and education to complainants on how to resolve less critical animal control issues, furnishes live traps and other aids, and explains animal behavior and how to prevent further predation.
2. Identifies the type of predation that has occurred and the species involved to evaluate the problem and develop a solution.
 - a. Verifies livestock loss or other property damage and determines the animal causing the problem by reading tracks and sign at the scene and necropsying livestock carcasses.
 - b. Calculates the extent of damage and its monetary value.
 - c. Chooses the best methods to remove problem wildlife including traps, snares, controlled pesticides, calling, or shooting.
 - i. Selects most effective location, species-specific set, and bait for traps and snares.
 - ii. Sets equipment to avoid non-target wildlife, livestock, pets, farm equipment, and public scrutiny; and checks it regularly.
 - iii. Maps placement of M-44's with GPS and posts appropriate signs and warnings.
 - iv. Chooses proper location and vocalization for predator calling.
 - v. Floats rivers during high-water conditions to shoot problem beaver.
 - vi. Removes beaver dams, may use explosives.
 - d. Initiates innovative tactics for control of predation.

- i. Trains and uses decoy dogs to heckle coyotes into gun range.
 - ii. Trains and uses hounds to track and hunt mountain lions.
 - iii. Organizes aerial hunts and may be an aerial gunner.
 - iv. Uses and handles lights and night vision optics to hunt predators at night.
 - e. Takes a proactive approach to manage populations of predators and nuisance wildlife in the district to lower the potential of predation.
 - f. Advises landowners how to prevent and reduce predation.
 - g. Documents verified livestock losses and other property damage, and numbers and descriptions of problem wildlife removed.
3. Meets locally with members of communities, local governments, tribal governments, and federal agencies in a variety of situations to relay information about department programs and establish a network of communication and cooperation.
- a. Meets with ranchers and farmers and related organizations regarding wildlife damage, instructs them on animal behavior and preventive measures, and informs them about available programs.
 - b. Meets with county commissioners to inform them about predation control activities in their jurisdictions, and about activities of other department programs.
 - c. Presents department information to the public by writing news articles and participating in radio and television shows, sport shows, and fairs.
 - d. Prepares and presents information about the purpose and methods of animal damage control for civic organizations, sportsmen's groups, 4-H clubs, and school classes.
 - e. Prepares and gives demonstrations on trapping, calling, and snaring at trappers' conventions and for local sportsmen's groups; and gives individual instruction.
 - f. Assists with organizing and teaching Hunt Safe classes.
 - g. Assists extension agents with coordination and implementation of landowner programs such as prairie dog control; and coordinates with other agencies when work involves federal, tribal, or other state-owned or managed lands.
 - h. Assists communities with search and rescue efforts, and provides them with information about notable weather and fire conditions.
4. Manages an extensive inventory of equipment, supplies, and vehicles to ensure readiness and capability to meet predatory control demands in the district.
- a. Cleans and sights-in rifles, shotguns, and pistols; and purchases and reloads ammunition and stores it properly.
 - b. Cleans, boils, waxes and dyes steel traps and makes adjustments and repairs; and builds and repairs cage traps.
 - c. Constructs snares.
 - d. Constructs matrix heads for M-44's, cleans, oils and stores them.
 - e. Orders and stores bait, lure, and scents.
 - f. Maintains and calibrates when necessary rangefinders, spotting scopes, night vision equipment, GPS units, callers, binoculars, etc.
 - g. Schedules or performs preventive maintenance on pickups, ATV's, boats, etc.
 - h. Cares for and trains dogs, maintains kennels, and secures vaccinations and other health care as needed.

5. Performs a variety of wildlife management functions to assist in development and implementation of department programs.
 - a. Performs non-lethal wildlife damage management which primarily involves big game species by putting up electric fences in strategic places, building fences around hay stacks, using scare devices such as propane guns, placing feed in strategic locations to prevent damage to hay supplies, etc.
 - b. Conducts a variety of wildlife surveys, compiles data, and prepares and sends reports.
 - c. Maps wildlife populations.
 - d. Assists with fisheries work such as spawning, clipping fins, stocking, and electrofishing lake surveys.
 - e. Tags bobcats taken by hunters and trappers and collects biodata.
 - f. Traps and relocates wildlife.
 - g. Collects wildlife tissue and blood for testing and monitoring diseases such as chronic wasting disease, rabies, plague, West Nile virus, mange, distemper, parvo, anthrax, etc.; follows sample-handling protocols and preservation techniques, and sends samples to the state laboratory.
 - h. Recognizes and reports disease symptoms in wildlife.
 - i. Assists with land management duties on walk-in and game production areas.
6. Maintains an office and performs administrative tasks in support of assigned functions to comply with program requirements, and to comply with department and state mandates.
 - a. Maintains a daily activity log and prepares monthly activity reports documenting work performed, e.g., numbers of complaints, equipment used, animals taken, meetings attended, presentations, extension activities, news releases, etc.
 - b. Prepares quarterly reports that document individual landowner complaints, livestock or property loss and value, methods used, and animals taken; and prepares annual reports of these activities in their jurisdictions for county commissioners.
 - c. Obtains and maintains landowners' releases which allow access to their property.
 - d. Keeps records on locations of M-44's and cyanide use; and prepares reports to the Department of Agriculture.
 - e. Prepares reports to tribal governments and federal agencies about activities that have taken place on their lands.
 - f. Prepares vehicle and ATV sheets with miles coded to projects, travel vouchers, and time sheets.
 - g. Responds to telephone calls at all hours of the day or night.
 - h. Attends predator district meetings, livestock organizations' conventions, training, department meetings and in-services, and trappers' conventions.
 - i. Assists with research projects by collecting field data and specimens, testing and reporting on new trapping methods and equipment, etc.
7. Performs other work as assigned.

D. Reporting Relationships:

Reports to a Regional Supervisor. Does not supervise but routinely provides training in animal behavior and animal damage prevention and control to citizens.

E. Challenges and Problems:

Challenged to know an assigned district made up of multiple counties and in most cases thousands of square miles, and the species of wildlife and their habitats in the district well enough to organize, manage and schedule the time required to equitably meet the animal damage control needs of the citizens within that district. This is difficult because it requires a calm demeanor and voice of reason when dealing with landowners who are upset over property losses and are anxious to have quick resolution to the problems; solving predatory problems when neighboring landowners refuse permission to hunt or trap; knowledgeable reading of the signs and identifying problem animals and removing them in a timely and efficient way; keeping equipment operational in poor weather such as rain, snowstorms, ice storms, wind, and extreme cold and heat; checking traps and snares within a specific time from when they were set; safely planning work in proximity to livestock and pets, homes and dwellings, and around towns and parks; determining a monetary value of property loss; working early morning and late-night hours; managing a forty-hour work week to accommodate unusual working hours; working and driving often in adverse weather and environmental conditions; planning to reduce predatory numbers before losses occur; and dealing with stress from high expectations of the public and failure to resolve all problems because of lack of time. Further challenged to deal with people who have negative views regarding hunting and trapping and to replace misinformation with facts; keep up to date on department seasons, regulations, programs, and policies in order to be able to provide useful and accurate information; and make presentations that are right for the audience and convey the purpose and methods of wildlife damage control in a realistic light.

Problems resolved include keeping a constant and accurate record of daily happenings; returning calls multiple times to try and find people at home; making sure wildlife surveys are done in the appropriate, structured environment; having breakdowns and finding vehicle repair and service in remote areas; giving sportsmen who call and hunt predators the first opportunity and still providing effective predatory management to landowners; dealing with the public's concerns and perceptions about mountain lions and teaching them the facts; protecting dogs from over-exertion and heat exhaustion; working with sick and diseased animals; and maintaining M-44 and pesticide certifications.

F. Decision-making Authority:

Decisions include the order and priority of daily contacts to be the most effective in the time available; whether a problem needs immediate resolution or whether preventive methods may be employed; how to approach each situation safely among wildlife, livestock, and people; what species and how many animals are causing the problem and the most appropriate method to use for resolution; the amount of monetary loss of each complaint; the size of area needed to resolve the problem; whether to hunt from the air or on the ground; what equipment to use, where to place it, and what baits to use; whether or not the weather is conducive to the work at hand; where and when to implement proactive plans in the district to reduce problem wildlife and forestall further predation; when and where to conduct field studies; which non-lethal methods to use for wildlife damage management; recommendations to citizens that help reduce or prevent future problems; presentations about wildlife control that are suitable for a wide range of demographics; whether to repair or replace equipment; recommendations to managers for training; and recommendations for budget items.

Decisions referred include authorization of overtime; approval of equipment purchases and major repairs, out-of-state travel, public presentations regarding high profile and sensitive issues, work on federal lands, participation in studies, actions outside normal policy, and training; priority

of aerial hunting among trapper districts; changes in survey protocols; and final authority for action taken on mountain lion issues.

G. Contact with Others:

Daily contact with landowners regarding predation and to let them know if something's wrong on their property, e.g., trespassers, livestock stuck in dams, missing livestock found, etc.; and with homeowners regarding nuisance wildlife causing property damage; weekly contact with regional staff to pick up complaints and exchange information about work duties; with Conservation Officers to exchange information on complaints they have received about predation; with sportsmen and the general public to provide information and instruction; and with extension and sheriffs' offices staff to pick up information about complaints and to help them with surveillance or to find people missing during storms, etc.; monthly contact with highway superintendents, utility officials, and town mayors regarding wildlife damage; with fire departments to guide them around the district during fires and to assist with firefighting; annual official contact with county commissioners to discuss and report on wildlife damage control activities within their jurisdictions; and with predator districts to formulate a maintenance predatory control plan around flocks of sheep and cattle herds; occasional contact with schools and sportsmen's clubs to make presentations; and with media to provide information about wildlife damage control and other department programs.

H. Working Conditions:

Duties of a State Trapper involve traveling extensively, often on bad roads and in inclement weather and in remote, rural areas; walking long distances in rough country while carrying packs, traps, and animals and while tracking and hunting animals; operating all terrain vehicles in rough country or around sloughs and in remote areas; working on flood-stage rivers and creeks in boats; setting and checking traps in deep water; climbing on river banks; handling wildlife, dead and alive, and being exposed to disease and injury; working around domestic livestock on the fight or in a panic because of predators; aerial gunning out the window of a low-flying airplane and being exposed to gun percussion, frostbite and extreme heat; shooting fast-moving targets on the ground without damaging the plane; reloading the gun inside the plane; potential plane crashes; working in the dark during early morning and late night hours while predators are out; confronting trespassers; answering and returning phone calls at all times of the day or night; and routinely handling firearms, explosives, sharps, poisons and chemicals.

I. Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

Knowledge of:

- animal behavior, wildlife identification, habitat and types of damage typically related to a species;
- animal diseases and safe-handling practices, disease sampling, collection and preservation methods;
- wildlife control methods; trapping equipment and the proper methods of location, bedding, staking, set construction, baiting, and luring; and how the environment such as terrain and wind currents affect the work at hand;
- firearms including rifles, shotguns, and pistols; ammunition and reloading tools and methods; and safe-storage practices;
- wildlife management practices and survey techniques.

Ability to:

- plan and effectively organize work priorities and requests for services;
- establish and maintain working relationships with individuals, the general public, local government officials, other state agencies, federal and tribal government officials;
- read and identify animals quickly and efficiently from tracks, scat, hair, kill sights, and other signs;
- read, interpret, and implement applicable department, state and federal laws and regulations;
- act as an intermediary among adjoining landowners who are unwilling to cooperate with each other for the purpose of securing a large enough area on which to practice predatory control effectively;
- balance landowners' expectations for predatory control with the public's expectations for sport and for humane treatment of animals with factual information and education;
- educate and inform people at all levels of knowledge about predators and the objectives of predatory control;
- navigate in rural and remote areas and adapt to changing weather;
- shoot a variety of firearms proficiently in mostly unfavorable conditions;
- use a computer and Microsoft Office programs such as Excel, Access, and Word;
- operate pickups, all terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, boats; and repair and service equipment in the field;
- communicate information clearly and concisely.